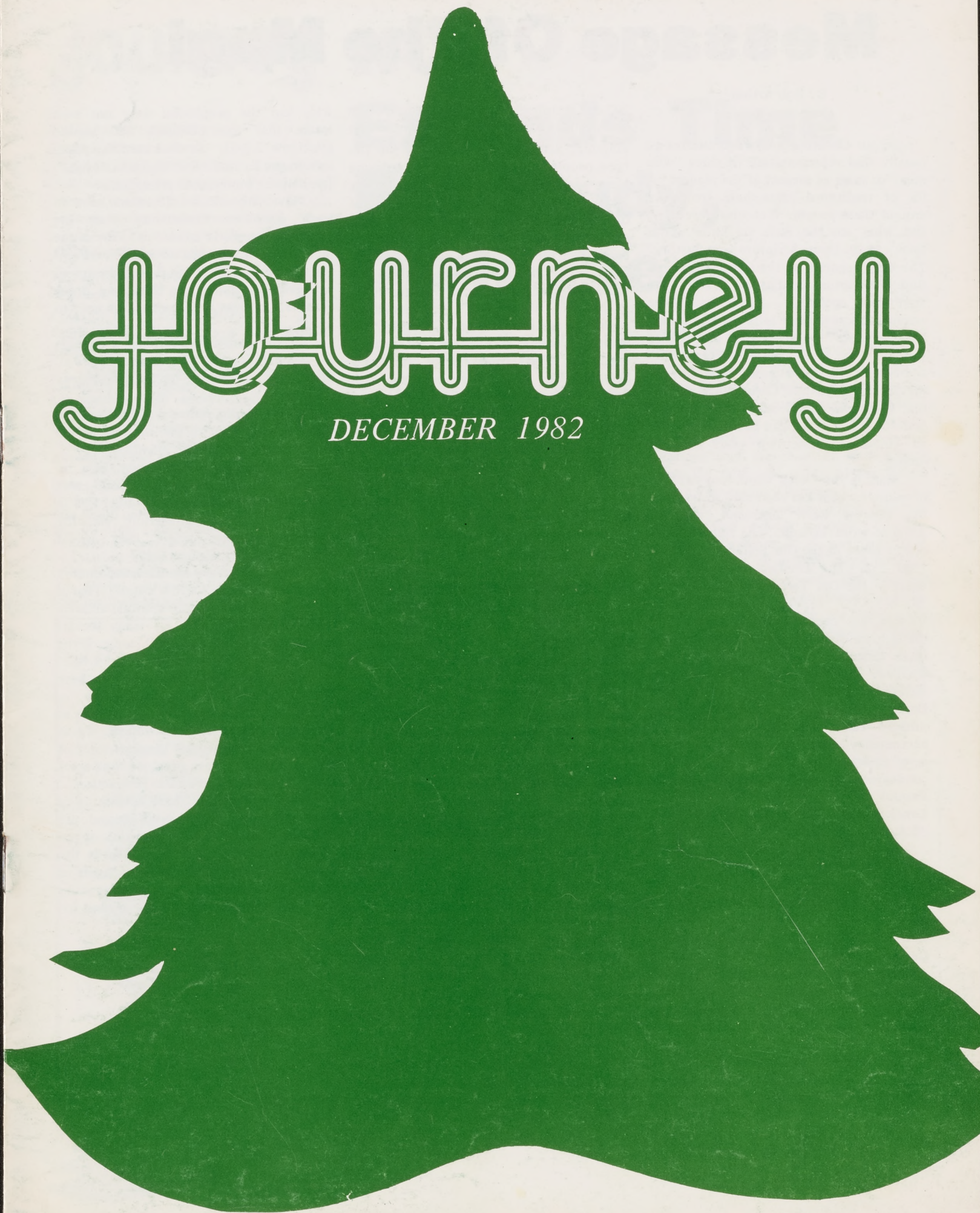


Journey

DECEMBER 1982



Message Of The Magi

By Bob Arthur
Collective Writer

In our Christmas plays and creches we usually find representation of three "wise men" or magi as present at the manger. A lot of traditional ideas have grown up around these people. Yet who were they, and what are the facts we know about them, both from Scripture and history? The only account of their appearance we find in Scripture is Matthew 2:1-16. No number is specified. Three have been assumed because three gifts are mentioned, but this does not necessarily mean there were exactly three magi who came. In addition, they were most certainly not present at the birth of Christ, since we read that they told Herod when they had first seen the guiding star, and Herod then killed all children "from two years old and under."

Magi is the Greek word *magoi* (plural of *magos*) which has been used to translate the Hebrew word *'ashshaph*, and the Aramaic word *'ashaph*. The Hebrew word occurs twice in the Old Testament: Daniel 1:20; 2:2. The Aramaic word occurs six times in the Old Testament: Daniel 2:10, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15. The King James Version has consistently translated both the Hebrew and Aramaic as astrologer. Yet these languages imply much more than what we understand by the English word astrologer. In Babylonia (the setting of Daniel), these people were the powerful priestly class who were proficient in necromancy, astrology, and divination. It is, of course, these kinds of people that are condemned by God in passages such as Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Leviticus 18:3, 24; 20:23, 27; 19:26, 31; 20:6.

In addition, the New Testament uses the Greek word *magos* not only in the Matthew 2 passage, but we find in Acts 13:6-8 that the wicked Bar-Jesus (Elymas) is called a *magos*. Also in Acts 8:9-11 we find Simon of Samaria practicing (*mageuo*) the art of magic (*mageia*). Both of the men are condemned in context as wicked because of their art. Why then does Matthew seem to paint the magi as good characters when they practiced their art to determine that the Christ is born?

It is interesting to note that astronomers tell us that a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars occurred three times in 7

BC—an extremely rare occurrence. In Babylonian astrology Jupiter represents kingship, Saturn was the star of the Hebrew people, and Mars represents a crushing blow to the enemies of the king. Numbers 24:17 prophesies that a star would rise out of Jacob. The Babylonians were well acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures because of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. So when Babylonian astrologers saw these three planets in conjunction twice in the spring time of 7 BC, they headed for Judah to see this predicted Messiah. We read that after leaving Herod's palace they saw the "star" once again (Matthew 2:9-10. This would have been the September conjunction in 7 BC.

Calendar experts tell us of a discrepancy in our modern calendar which should place the birth of Jesus somewhere between 7-4 BC. We also know that Herod died in 4 BC after killing the babies in Bethlehem. Because shepherds were tending their flocks by night when the birth occurred (Luke 2:8), and they only do this during the lambing season of the spring, we may assume that Jesus was born at the first conjunction in May. By the time the magi paid their visit in September, and escaped back to their country, and Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14), and Herod set out to kill the babies in Bethlehem, Jesus was probably almost one year old. The Greeks reckon age in relationship to one's next birthday. One is in one's second year after one's first birthday. Therefore, Herod's killing of those who were two years old and under would mean that he killed all those who had attained their first birthday and under. This most likely took place in the spring of 6 BC.

In any case, it is a haunting question as to why Matthew mentions the visit of the magi, and their astrological observance of the star, in view of the Hebrew and Christian disdain for astrology. It is vaguely reminiscent of the problem many have with Luke 16:8, where we find Jesus telling his disciples to learn from the non-Christians around them: "the children of this age are in their generation wiser than the children of light." [sic]

Note that Jesus was at least four months old when the magi asked Herod where he was. Jesus was the Hebrew Messiah, yet the Hebrew establishment

who had the prophesies were not even aware that their Messiah had arrived (Matthew 2:3-6). So God used the pagan astrologers to teach the "children of light" [sic] their own religious priorities.

How often do we Christians need to learn our own Christianity from the non-Christian world around us? One of the most frequent reasons we hear the world for not being a Christian is that we are all hypocrites: saying one thing and doing another. Is there a lesson here we need to learn?

Or, "if Christians have such a concern for saving the world, why do they spend all their time and money on building showy churches?"

Or, "I would rather worship alone in God's nature, than to put up with all the in-fighting among church members."

And again, "If Christianity is a reflection of God's love for the world, why do they kill in the name of Christ like in the Crusades, the inquisition, and the doctrinal disputes where they would excommunicate their heretics?"

One of the traps the Christian church has fallen into is a narrow vision. That is we tend to look for only spiritual answers to all problems. There are many secular sciences that are dealing with some of the issues we as human beings have to face. Sociology, psychology, and sexology have offered some possible answers we as Christians need to consider in our lives as we interact with self and others. We as Christians should at least consider some of the material they have provided us in areas such as loneliness and human interaction.

Do we as UFMCC have something to learn from the pagan magi around us? Although the traditional translation of the Greek word *magoi* as wise men is linguistically questionable, perhaps it gets to the heart of the lesson. Let us learn from the non-Christian wise people around us.



JOURNEY

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NCC Extends Time For Study, Dialogue

by R. Adam DeBaugh
Collective Writer

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1.

The UFMCC sent "so great a cloud of witnesses" to the November Governing Board meeting of the National Council of Churches, and they ran "with perseverance the race that is set before us." Nine people made up the UFMCC delegation to the November 2-5 Governing Board meeting and they did such a splendid job witnessing to what the UFMCC is all about to Governing Board members, that the NCC voted overwhelmingly to extend the time and breadth of the study of the Metropolitan Community Churches.

Two key votes, one on Thursday and one on Friday, set in motion a process that ensured that member churches of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. would be engaged in real dialogue with the MCC.

Last May at the Governing Board meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, the NCCC voted to spend a year studying the ecclesiological issues raised by the UFMCC's application for membership in the 32-member council of Protestant and Orthodox churches.

That study was entrusted to the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council, which was to report back to the Governing Board at its May 1983 meeting, ironically scheduled to be held in San Francisco.

The study process that the Faith and Order Commission set up involved theologians from NCCC member churches and

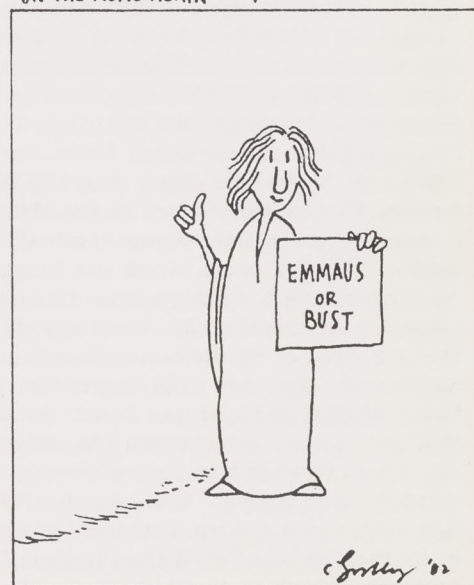
would only involve the UFMCC at the last stage of the study in December, 1982, at a meeting between National Council theologians and MCC folks. There was no real provision for members of the NCCC Governing Board and their churches to dialogue with the MCC and to ask the questions that are most on their minds about the faith and polity of the Metropolitan Community Churches.

When the Governing Board gathered for the first caucus meetings Tuesday evening, November 2, it was clear that there was a lot of concern about the way the process had developed. The Women's Caucus was especially concerned that there were few women among the theologians selected to represent the National Council. Discussions began almost immediately on how best to open up the process to enable

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Lifelines

"ON THE ROAD AGAIN" #1



real dialogue and exchange of ideas to occur.

Members of the Constituent Membership Committee, which had been so supportive of our application in the past, met with the UFMCC delegation Wednesday evening and various concerns about the study were aired, inspiring them to go on to plan a way to open up the process. The next morning, they and others on the Governing Board had readied their strategy, with the support of Council leadership and Faith and Order Commission leaders who were doing the original study.

Ms. Lacy Camp of Mt. Berry, Georgia, a member of the United Methodist delegation who had introduced the amendment to the study resolution last May which placed a one year time limit on the study, rose to introduce the new strategy: "I move that an ad hoc committee of nine members of the Governing Board be named by the President; that this committee be instructed to bring to this Governing Board, before it leaves on Friday, a creative and expanded process that would facilitate dialogue among member communions surrounding the issues related to the UFMCC's eligibility and membership on the Governing Board; that this committee be instructed to place this process within the time frame of beginning in March 1983, with the Faith and Order report to the Executive Committee, and completing all voting matters related to the UFMCC's eligibility and membership be at least November 1984."

After some debate, mostly to clarify what was meant by the resolution and that it had the support of the UFMCC, it was passed overwhelmingly. Then National Council of Churches President Bishop James Armstrong, of the United Methodist Church, appointed the nine member ad hoc committee, consisting of the Rev. Avery D. Post, president of the United Church of Christ, as chair; the Rev. Mary Gene Boteler, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.; Father Alexander Doumouras, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; Valerie L. Ford, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the Rev. Arie R. Brouwer, head of the Reformed Church in America; the Rev. Ann Cally Rogers-Witte, United Church of Christ; the Rev. J. Oscar McCloud, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (who is also chair of the Constituent Membership Committee); the Rev. Gwendolyn S. King, Lutheran Church in America; and the Rev. William G. Rusch, Lutheran Church in America, (who is also

Governing Board

by R. Adam DeBaugh
Collective Writer

So much happened at the Governing Board meeting of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in November that we tried to note a number of vignettes of the experience to give you a fleeting sense of what it was like. Here is a selection of Images from the meeting:

* The Hospitality Suite – scurrying to get flyers printed once we finally knew the room number – then scurrying to get the flyers distributed – buying coffee, tea, sugar, milk, cups, napkins, spoons – waiting for the first visitor from the Governing Board.

* Nancy Wilson getting on a crowded elevator and having a Lutheran pastor turn to her and ask, "While I've got you here, tell me, what is your doctrine of sin?" "I get off in three floors," Nancy says. "Then you have 30 seconds," the pastor responds. When Nancy gave the fastest exposition on sin in history for the pastor and a crowd of curious and bewildered elevator folk, the pastor asked, "So you don't deny the existence of sin?" The doors opened then for Nancy's floor and she tapped the Lutheran on the arm as she left the elevator saying, "Not hardly!"

* Adam DeBaugh holding a weeping Lesbian who is just coming out and who represents a conservative church on the Governing Board.

* Karen Ziegler telling two Orthodox priests who came up to the Hospitality Suite that she is afraid of them, thus breaking the ice for a good discussion.

* Sightseeing with Goerge McDermott on 5th Avenue.

* United Methodist Paul Vandenburg telling the entire Governing Board, "As a member of the Gay community I can tell you that Lesbians and Gay men are very interested in what we do."

* Adam tried to make an analogy to an Episcopal priest about the wrongness of referring to the UFMCC as a "Gay Church" by saying that that is like calling the Episcopal church a "straight church because most of the members are straight," only to have the priest say, "But the Episcopal Church couldn't really be called a 'straight church,' now could it?"

* Members of the Constituent Membership Committee and other Governing Board folks filling our suite Wednesday night.

* Dressing up in "good clothes" for three days – "Oh, my poor Gay nerves!"

* Hugging Governing Board members – and having some of them (though not many) hug us too!

* Jennie Boyd Bull and Karen Ziegler at the Women's Caucus meeting, and hearing them talk about UFMCC for three hours.

* Honest questions from some of the Governing Board folks.

* "What is your Christology? I don't have much time, so hurry."

chair of the Commission on Faith and Order).

The UFMCC delegation had been consulted about members of this ad hoc committee and was pleased with the appointments. The committee set to work immediately and consulted with UFMCC delegates from time to time about their progress. Friday morning, Dr. Post, as chair of the ad hoc committee, presented the committee's recommendations:

"In order to facilitate study and dialogue among member communions concerning the eligibility for consideration of membership, and membership, of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Com-

munity Churches (UFMCC), we move that the following process be implemented:

"that at the conclusion of the Meeting of the Commission on Faith and Order in March 1983, the following written materials be sent to members of the NCCC Governing Board and to the UFMCC:

"–the report of the Commission on Faith and Order;

"–excerpts of the NCCC Constitution and By-laws relating to eligibility and application for membership in the NCCC, and

"–membership application documentation of the UFMCC and information about the UFMCC provided by UFMCC.

Meeting & Images

- * Adam's sore neck and Paula's stomach pain.
- * Having our own prayer meeting to lift up Chet Jones right after his accident – Paula saying, later, "In the middle of our bureaucratic stuff we were still able to be Christian."
- * The many women on the Governing Board who worked hard and long on our behalf.
- * Lacy Camp of the United Methodist delegation delaying her departure for her grandmother's funeral to introduce and speak eloquently for the resolution extending and expanding the study process – in the midst of her personal sorrow she still took time to fight for us!
- * Arie Brouwer, head of the Reformed Church in America, asking hard, important questions of us.
- * George McDermott sitting on the couch in the Hospitality Suite charming a succession of Baptist delegates.
- * Black clergy coming out to Renee McCoy.
- * The dull nature of much of the meetings was relieved on Friday by laughter at one speaker's comments, causing Paula to headline the event, "And On the Last Day They Laughed."
- * United Church of Christ delegates telling Karen and Jeff Pulling that the issue of Gays and Lesbians in the church would not have come up had we not been at the meeting.
- * Our "visitors badges" were pink so Paula and Jennie made them into pink triangles for us all.
- * The opening worship service used the prodigal child parable and then we said, "We, God's creatures, of every race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, claim our right to freedom." Though we were relegated to "other status," the preacher, Dr. Randolph W. Nugent, Jr., Vice President for Church and Society, referred to "sexual orientation" in his laundry list!
- * A special preview of the new film "Ghandi," – a profoundly moving experience – Gandhi saying, though tyrants may rule for a time, truth and love always win in the end. – meeting Richard Attenborough, the films producer and director.
- * Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young's speech on Friday.
- * United Methodist delegate Jeanne Audrey Powers telling Karen Ziegler that she uses Karen's article, "Jesus According to a Lesbian" extensively in her work and ministry.
- * Paula Schoenwether giving away our only copy of the new *Journey* magazine to a wonderful Governing Board woman.
- * MCC New York having a prayer meeting to lift up the National Council Governing Board and our delegation.

"that the following materials be made available to Governing Board members and the UFMCC upon request:

"–formal and precedent-setting actions taken by member communions related to the issue of homosexuality;

"–appropriate documents defining the ecclesiology of member communions.

"that between now and the May 1983 meeting of the Governing Board of the NCCC, member communions be encouraged to engage in dialogue with the UFMCC and to study the issue with their own Communions.

"that the May 1983 meeting of the Governing Board devote a significant

portion of time to the discussion of issues related to the UFMCC application, providing opportunities to facilitate discussion within each delegation and within the Governing Board. The UFMCC should be contacted for its assistance in resourcing these discussions. Possibilities could include a forum, a panel, small discussion groups and opportunities to participate in worship with the UFMCC.

"that implementation of the above process be the responsibility of the Constituent Membership Committee in consultation with staff and the Executive Committee.

"that this process allow a vote on

eligibility for consideration of membership for UFMCC as early as November 1983 and a second vote, if necessary and if declared eligible, as early as May 1984."

After a small amount of debate, the motion was passed overwhelmingly.

What this means is that one of the main goals of the UFMCC in its application for membership in the National Council of Churches is being accomplished even before we are accepted into membership. That goal, of course, is dialogue with the churches, and through this newly expanded study process, the dialogue will go on as never before.

Our experience at the Governing Board meeting was an exceptionally powerful one, full of long hours, hard questions, and good, in-depth discussions. We were able to make contact with a surprising number of people on the Governing Board, thanks in part to our numbers and to the Hospitality Suite we staffed.

The experience the Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and I had in Nashville and the May 1982 Governing Board meeting was instructive. We realized that it was impossible to meet and talk to all the people we needed to with only two people from the UFMCC there and that we really needed a base of operations.

Since the National Council was unwilling to provide us with space we had to rent our own Hospitality Suite. We had a place to rest and freshen up when needed, we had a place to distribute our literature, and we had a place where people could come and meet with us. We had coffee and tea available (thanks to the loan of a coffee pot from Warren Zeh, a United Presbyterian at Union Theological Seminary) and many Governing Board members came up to visit with us and to ask questions about the Fellowship.

The UFMCC delegation to the November NCCC Governing Board meeting was probably the best the Department of Ecumenical Relations has ever assembled. It included people from every level of Fellowship life, lay people, clergy, heads of Fellowship agencies, District Coordinators, pastors, an Elder, men and women, Third World people, and of course, Gays and Lesbians for the Governing Board members to get to know.

The delegation included Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson of Los Angeles, clerk of the Board of Elders and co-director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations (United Methodist background); the Rev. Delores Berry, District Coordinator of the Mid-Atlantic District and pastor of New

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Department of Christian Social Action

by R. Adam DeBaugh

Chair, Department of Christian Social Action

Since we have always defined Christian Social Action as "meeting human needs," it is important to remember the needs of people right in our own congregations.

MCC of Northern Virginia has come up with a simple program that allows its members and friends to keep in touch with

GRNL asks for immediate funding for AIDS epidemic

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Gay Rights National Lobby, in response to the worsening AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) epidemic, is organizing an emergency appeal for major medical research funding from Congress' December special session.

Since the end of September, nearly 100 more people have contracted AIDS and about 35 more people have died, bringing the total number of cases to 691 and total deaths to 278. Two new cases are reported every day.

Medical researchers still know nothing about the cause, mode of transmission, treatment, or cure of AIDS. They do know that the syndrome causes a profound suppression of a critical part of the body's immune system. AIDS is probably always fatal.

The federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) has made AIDS its top priority, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has begun basic research on AIDS. CDC is calling the AIDS crisis an epidemic. But Congress thus far has appropriated very little for AIDS research.

Congress came back for its lameduck session on November 29 and took up, among other things, an appropriations bill involving health issues. GRNL, along with many other concerned organizations and congressional supporters, is asking for \$5 million for CDC AIDS research and \$10 million for NIH AIDS research in fiscal year 1983. If the Senate does *not* report out a health appropriations bill (and it doesn't seem likely it will), GRNL is calling for at least \$2 million to continue CDC's surveillance and research until a full

each other. Three by five inch index cards are made available during the service for people in the congregation to write messages to folks who are not there that Sunday. The cards are addressed to a member or friend of the church - preferably *not* written during the sermon, according to the Rev. Billie Edwards, MCC-Nova's pastor - and collected with the offering and after the service. Then the Church clerk or another volunteer sorts through the cards and mails them.

appropriation can be provided.

So far, CDC has received only \$500,000 specifically for AIDS research, while they actually will spend \$2.5 million in fiscal 1982 on AIDS. In other words, CDC has shifted some \$2 million from its other programs (not to mention the 100 staff it has shifted to AIDS). However, for next year *no* money is allocated in the House's proposed health appropriations bill for specific AIDS research - not even a continuation of last session's \$500,000 appropriation.

"In 1982 the overall funding for the Centers for Disease Control was effectively cut by 20 percent," said Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment. "The administration's 1982 budget does not even keep pace with inflation and will mean a further effective cut of seven percent. The study of these relatively rare and poorly understood diseases will surely suffer."

NIH spent only \$865,000 on AIDS research in fiscal year 1982. It has announced that next year it will shift about \$3.5 million to AIDS research, but this represents only a tiny fraction of its \$4 billion budget. CDC, which primarily is not a research agency, is spending almost as much as NIH, which funds more medical research than any other organization in the world.

Meanwhile the epidemic rages. Young, previously healthy people are being killed by a disease which has been called a wholly new medical phenomenon. The death count mounts weekly. Seventy-five percent of the victims are gay men.

People write others when they are ill, or troubled by some personal problem, when they are looking for work, when they have some special joy in their lives, or family difficulties. In fact, people write messages for any kind of problem, joy or event - even to say, "we've missed you here at church," for folks who have been away.

A member of the congregation contributed a roll of 20 cent stamps to get the program started, others contributed pens and three by five cards, so the program cost the church little.

I know that this may seem to be an artificial and institutional approach to something people should be doing on their own, but the fact is that regardless of our good intentions, we don't just seem to get the time to make the phone calls and write the cards to people about whom we are thinking and whom we are keeping in our prayers. I know how much it meant to me to receive a couple of envelopes filled with cards after I was ill recently. Somehow it didn't feel at all artificial. In fact, it made me feel very good. The concept of "meeting human needs" begins at home. If we work to keep extending our Christian outreach to those in our own immediate family of faith, the next steps of reaching out to people with needs whom we don't even know is much easier.

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No Longer Called Forsaken

by Loni Allen
Collective Member

On October 20, 50 or so people gathered for the first Third World Lesbian and Gay Christian Conference held in Washington, DC at MCCDC. People came from all across America, as well as from Europe.

The weekend was filled with stimulating workshops and exciting speakers as well as incredible entertainers. Friday evening, after registration, Rev. Renee McCoy, pastor of Harlem MCC, director of the Department of Race Relations and the Conference Coordinator, opened the conference with welcoming remarks and the opening address in a way that warmed hearts and made everyone feel right at home. The participants were entertained and spiritually fed that evening by the singing of Rev. Delores Berry, pastor of New Life MCC, Virginia, District Coordinator of the Mid-Atlantic District and Renee's right arm during the weekend. Mr. Vinson Thomas, soloist from New York City, sang ole' time Black spirituals that had the place rockin' and the shoutin' flowin' and Ms. Carolyn Mobley, guitarist and singer from MCC Atlanta, Georgia mesmerized everyone with her golden string playing and her rich voice.

Saturday morning opened with an address by the Rev. Jose Mojica, District Coordinator of the Hispanic Americas District and pastor of Iglesia de la Comunidad Metropolitana, Los Angeles, California. Rev. Mojica spoke about the struggle he personally went through coming out as well as the struggles of the Hispanic Community in UFMCC in claiming their identity and authority. They look forward to more visibility and involvement in the growth of UFMCC.

We moved on from there to share in workshops about Reaganomics and the New Right, Parenting, Sexism and Patriarchy, Relationships and Homosexuality and the Bible.

After lunch the group separated into Racial-Gender Caucuses and defined what the wants/needs were and discussed ways in which they can be obtained. The latter part of the afternoon was spent in workshops dealing with Gender Inclusiveness, Lesbian and Gay Prisoners/Ex-Offenders, Coming Out in Third World communities

and Christian ethics. Everyone was stimulated by the workshops, learned a whole lot and shared from our gut-level realities.

Dinner was hosted that evening by members of MCCDC and Nova MCC. They went out of their way to provide us with a meal that was tasty and had an ethnic flavor. We shared our table with members of Washington D.C.'s street community who wandered in and out of the festivities all weekend.

The keynote address was brought to us that evening by Dr. James Tinney, Founder and Chair of Pentecostals for Human Rights; Professor at Howard University; historian; writer; lecturer; theologian and Pastor of Faith Temple, a Third World Lesbian and Gay Pentecostal church in Washington, D.C. Dr. Tinney was recently excommunicated from the Temple Church of God in Christ for his work in Gay and Lesbian's rights and for being a self-affirmed Gay male. (See *Journey*, November issue for story). Dr. Tinney's address was entitled "Celebration of Life and Unity," and he spoke to us about the importance of claiming for ourselves our identities and responsibilities, as well as rejecting the homophobia, misogyny and dualism that has poisoned Third World communities for too long. Dr. Tinney, as usual, had everyone on their feet clapping and shouting with his candid insights and enthusiasm for life and liberty.

The talent showcase Saturday night brought more good music from Rev. Delores Berry, Mr. Vinson Thomas and Ms. Carolyn Mobley. The music of Blackberri, a gay folk singer/guitarist from San Francisco, challenged us, raised our consciousness and spoke of love and abuse of Mother Earth. Latetta Theresa, a composer, flautist, pianist and dramatist from New York, blew us away with her absolutely extraordinary flute playing, while humming and playing the drums. Incredible!

After worship on Sunday morning we gathered to T.C.B., share our weekend, our hopes for the future, our expectations of the Fellowship and to say our goodbyes. A major network was developed, with tasks for the upcoming months assigned and energy generated to share and spread to our respective communities of faith. The day ended with dynamic worship services at MCCDC, Rev. McCoy preaching and at

FIRST 3RD WORLD LESBIAN AND GAY CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

Faith Temple with Rev. Mojica as guest preacher. It was an exciting weekend, high on energy, love and hope, to which the Presence of the Spirit of the Living God bore witness and unified us as a body of believers who are no longer called Forsaken! *Rev. Delores Berry, District Coordinator of the Mid-Atlantic District, would like to thank the district for the tremendous outreach they did in hosting the conference. A special thanks to MCCDC for sharing their space and for the countless number of people who gave of their time, talents and offerings to make the conference a success and for once again showing that the Mid-Atlantic District is upward bound!*

NCC continued from page 5

Life MCC of Tidewater, Norfolk, Virginia, (Christian Methodist Episcopal background); the Rev. George McDermott, chair, Commission on Special Ministries, pastor, MCC Providence, Rhode Island, and co-District Coordinator of the Northeast District (Baptist background); the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Pulling, director of Samaritan Education Center Extension Program, Hartford, Connecticut (United Church of Christ background); Ms. Paula Schoenwether, editor, *Journey* magazine, lay worship coordinator of De Colores MCC, Los Angeles, (United Church of Christ background); the Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull, chair of the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission, and pastor, MCC Baltimore (Episcopal background); the Rev. Renee McCoy, pastor of Harlem MCC, New York, and director of Race Relations, (Roman Catholic background); the Rev. Karen Ziegler, pastor, MCC New York, member of the Steering Committee of the NCC Commission on Women in Ministry, and member of the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee, (United Presbyterian background), and Mr. R. Adam DeBaugh, co-director, Department of Ecumenical Relations and director, Department of Christian Social Action, (Episcopal background).

A complete information packet on the application of the UFMCC to the National Council of the Churches of Christ may be obtained for \$1.50 from the Department of Ecumenical Relations, 8301 - 16th Street, Suite 201, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

EXCEL

Exercise In Christian Community Living

by Keith Apple

EXCEL Coordinator

I want to share my excitement about the EXCEL program with you. God, working through the EXCEL weekend experience, changed my life dramatically. Although I had been raised in a Christian home, I rebelled against my parents and the church in my teen years. Rules, regulations, hypocrisy and condemnation which I felt because I wasn't "perfect" led me to totally reject the church. Over a dozen years of ignoring God, however, did not convince me that God did not exist. Somehow I always knew there was much more than this physical life that we experience daily.

A series of circumstances over a two year period led me straight to the pits. Heavily involved in drugs, I tried to escape the pain, rejection and self-hate that made up my life. At my lowest point, I cried out to God in desperation to reveal to me what I was all about and where I fit in the universal plan. Over the next few years, I searched for God in many places, through many faiths and people, and in many ways. A series of meaningful events slowly led me back to Christianity. I read the Bible - what a surprise in that it said so many things I didn't know it had said and didn't say so many things I thought it did! - and was convinced maybe I could be a Christian after all. I started attending a Bible study and sharing group in Marin County and thought maybe I was a Christian in some sense.

At this point, a dear close friend of several years, Rev. Roger Webb (but he was just Roger then) had a tremendous conversion experience from atheism to Christianity through MCC and I was amazed and elated about his experience. His later involvement in Excel in Los Angeles finally resulted in my attending. What an experience that was for me!

For the first time in my life, Jesus and God became real. I met Jesus that weekend. I was confronted with everything I was, everything I had been in the past, and everything I wanted to be. My life has been constantly changing ever since. Growing, becoming involved in the church,

changing my values and ideals. The EXCEL weekend experience motivated me to learn who God is, what Jesus is all about, and where I fit.

In the five and one half years since my weekend, I have become progressively more involved in the church and the EXCEL Movement. I have seen so many changes in people's lives through EXCEL that I am convinced that God is indeed moving in the movement and changing people in a dynamic way.

My experience will not be everyone's experience. However, I have seen other's lives changed so dramatically in such positive and productive ways for our God. The vast majority of people I have known who have experienced the weekend confirm they have indeed grown also.

EXCEL, based on the Cursillo Movement which began in the Catholic Church and has since spread through many denom-

inations around the world, is a unique educational experience for those who participate in it. EXCEL teams conduct the weekends for laity and clergy and are mostly made up of lay people. The weekend teaches, through a series of talks and varied related activities, what is basic to living a Christian life in these modern times of ours where Christianity is definitely NOT the "in" thing to be doing. It teaches how to let the Spirit move in our lives to make our stated ideal of living a life in union with God real and meaningful.

A major theme is the concept that basic to a growing Christian life is learning to live in "community" with other Christians - such as the early Christians were instructed. Learning to love, fight, make up, share, care, encourage, support, confront and be Christians with our sisters and brothers in the church is another basic key to the meaningful Christian experience.

Lifelines

"ON THE ROAD AGAIN" #2 (ACTS 8:26-40)



"Sure I'll interpret for you. You want it systematic, epistemological or relative?"

fellowship news

our journey

DISTRICT CONFERENCE REPORT

The weekend of October 9-11, delegates (lay and clergy) met in Concord, California to conduct the business of the Northwest District. Travelers came from as far away as Honolulu and Anchorage. And what a family reunion it was. Before long the business aspect of conference was secondary to the sharing and rejoicing that Jesus Christ is Lord and we are all God's children.

The major item of business at Conference was the election of new District Officers: Rev. David Pelletier was elected District Coordinator; Bob Jones was elected Assistant District Coordinator; Jim House is Treasurer; Steve Warren, Clerk.

Rev. Betty Pederson is the new clergy representative to the FFO and Jack Hubbs is the lay representative.

BUILDING BURGLARIZED AT MCC IN THE VALLEY

According to Jack Berts of MCC in the Valley (North Hollywood, CA), their church was burglarized on the night of November 9th or the morning of November 10th. He stated that it appeared to be a crime for strictly monetary reasons and not an attack against the Gay and Lesbian community. The church was insured.

HARLEM MCC CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Harlem MCC celebrated its first anniversary on November 7 with about 50 people in attendance.

Rev. Delores Berry, Mid-Atlantic District Coordinator and pastor of New Life MCC in Tidewater, Virginia, preached at the afternoon service.

In addition to the anniversary celebration members and friends worshipped for the first time in their new building. Three new members were also taken in.

Rev. Renee McCoy, chair of the Department of Race Relations, is the pastor and founder of Harlem MCC. McCoy recently organized the First Third World Lesbian and Gay Christian Conference which was held in Washington, D.C.

NEW COVENANT MCC INSTALLS NEW PASTOR

New Covenant MCC installed its new Pastor, the Rev. J.E. Paul Breton, in special ceremonies on Sunday, November 21.

New Covenant MCC, a small community of conservative Christians, has relocated several times with a succession of temporary pastors. Now in rented quarters in Garden Grove, the congregation intends a longterm pastor and a healthy growth rate to serve the needs of Gay and Lesbian Christians and others in the northern Orange County area.

Breton, native of New Hampshire and raised in Connecticut, has been a Staff Clergy of New Covenant MCC since October, 1981. He brings to New Covenant MCC 20 years experience in founding organizations and churches. Breton was instrumental in founding seven congregations of the UFMCC. He has pastored four churches and has served on many committees of this denomination.

FIRST UNITED KINGDOM, WESTERN EUROPE DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The first United Kingdom and Western Europe District Conference was held in Birmingham, England November 5-7 with about 60 people attending.

Workshops included discussions about Faith, Fellowship and Order, the Laity and prayer. A film on ecology was also shown during the weekend conference.

During the business portion of the conference, the conference voted to send Timothy Spiers, lay representative, to the Commission on the Laity meeting to be held in Florida.

According to Rev. Elder Jean White, pastor of MCC London, altar calls are not a common event but the Saturday night

worship had an altar call with two people being baptized and many rededicating their lives to God. "I have never seen such excitement in the laity and there is a real concern that they must do something themselves and not just rely on their pastor. They realize the necessity for outreach in a way they never have before and I see the Spirit moving among us in a new way this coming year," White said.

Chris Messenger, a lay person at MCC London said, "It felt like an exciting step forward in our development here. I just hope we keep on burning."

Rev. Joe McVay-Abbott, pastor of MCC Birmingham said, "Two things in particular surprised and delighted me and I give God praise for them. Firstly, the ease with which everybody talked about their experience and memories of the weekend. There was no reticence from anyone. People talked freely with what I can only describe as self confidence.

"Secondly, there was a feeling of excitement about the things in store for us that have not faded as the weekend disappears into the past and an intensity about making the most of all opportunities that God may give us."

FIRST NORTH AMERICAN GAY CHORAL FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN 1983

"Come Out and Sing Together!" is the name selected for the first North American Gay choral festival, which will be held in New York City in the Fall of 1983. The four-day event is tentatively scheduled for the week following Labor Day.

To Stay Sober:

HALT

For all of you having trouble with your sobriety...if you don't want to drink over the holidays, don't get too

Hungry
Angry
Lonely
Tired

If you're having trouble...call a friend!

Kwanzaa yenu iwe na heri! (Happy Kwanzaa)

by Hasani Gough
Collective Member

Kwanzaa is the only nationally celebrated, indigenous, non-heroic Black holiday in the United States. It has become the established practice of millions of Black people and it is of critical importance to the people who are involved in this celebration.

Kwanzaa is a time for the gathering in of our people, a celebration of ourselves and our achievements, and rededication to greater achievements and fuller, more meaningful lives in the future. The collective values, spirit and practices which pervade Kwanzaa have their historical and cultural roots in Africa.

Kwanzaa is not an imitation. It is not a Black Christmas or Black Chanukkah. These holidays already exist and duplication with only the word Black to distinguish the difference is an irresponsible imitation in which no self-respecting, self-defining and self-determining people would be involved.

It's reinforcing gestures, often called rituals, are designed to strengthen our collective concept as a people, honor our past, critically evaluate our present and commit ourselves to a fuller more productive future.

The core principles of Kwanzaa are the *Nguzo Saba* (the Seven Principles) which were developed by Dr. Ron Karenga in the sixties as a necessary minimum set of principles. The *Nguzo Saba* are social principles, dealing with ways to relate with one another and rebuild our lives. They require, not withdrawal, but confrontation with both ourselves and society. In fact, the *Nguzo Saba* require that we not only confront ourselves, but also renew ourselves.

NGUZO SABA (The Seven Principles)

1. Umoja (Unity)
2. Kujichagulia (Self-determination)
3. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)
4. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)
5. Nia (Purpose)
6. Kuumba (Creativity)
7. Imani (Faith)

Maulani Ron Karenga
7 September 1965

The basic operational principles for celebrating Kwanzaa are that gifts: 1) be

given mainly to children; 2) that they always be given on the basis of merit in terms of commitment made and kept; and 3) that they not be mandatory, excessive or unrelated to the goals of liberating and rebuilding ourselves as a free, proud and productive people.

The established days for the celebration of Kwanzaa are December 26 - January 1. It is on December 26 that after Christmas sales begin and therefore it is economically sound to shop after the Christmas season rather than during the season.

The word Kwanzaa is derived from the Swahili word *Kwanza* which means first and is part of the phrase *matunda ya kwanza* (first fruits). The change in spelling came about to accommodate the wishes and inspire the creativity of the first seven children involved in the celebration.

There are seven basic symbols and two supplementary ones. They are:

- 1) mazao (crops)
- 2) mkeka (mat)
- 3) kinara (the candle holder)
- 4) vibunzi (ears of corn)
- 5) zawadi (gifts)
- 6) kikombe cha umoja (the unity cup)
- 7) mishumaa saba (the seven candles)

There are two supplementary symbols which are the *Nguzo Saba* and the *bendera ya taifa* (the flag or standard).

The seven basic symbols:

The *mazao* (crops) represent the rewards of collective productive labor and the reinforcement of communal bonds through collective labor.

The *mkeka* (mat) is a traditional African item and is the foundation as all the symbols are placed on the *mkeka*.

The *kinara* (candle holder) is symbolic of African parenthood, i.e. African motherhood as well as African fatherhood. The values of Kwanzaa reject any interpretation of life which denies Black women our real and impressive role in life, labor and struggle.

The *vibunzi* (ears of corn) represent our children and each household (family) uses as many ears of corn as it has children. The *kinara* and *vibunzi* are linked conceptually and functionally in the task of establishing and perpetuating the people.

Inherent in the African concept of

children is the idea that children are the real and living representatives of our future. Our children are ours through our investment in them and in their development. This is true regardless of the specific egg and sperm that went into their biological make-up.

The *zawadi* (gifts) are symbolic of commitments made and kept and of the fruits of labor.

The *kikombe cha umoja* (cup of unity) symbolizes the first of the *Nguzo Saba*. It is used to pour *tambiko* (libation) for the ancestors and then drunk from by each member in a reinforcement gesture of honor, praise and collective work and commitment to continue the struggle our ancestors began. It is our ancestors who, through their love, labor and struggle laid the foundation for us, pushed our lives and stories forward and gave us basic principles by which we could live our lives in strength, dignity, sisterhood and brotherhood.

The *mishumaa saba* (seven candles) represent the *Nguzo Saba* which are a product of tradition and reason, of stories and of response to needs. It is principles to be employed to solve the problems which confront us all as a people. The seven candles include one black, three red and three green. The black candle is placed in the middle, the three red are placed on the left and the three green on the right. Each day a candle is lit to symbolize one of the *Nguzo Saba*. This reinforces respect and absorption of the values therein. After it is lit, the principle is explained and used as the main topic of discussion for that day.

The black candle is lit first and then the candles are lit on the left and the right alternately. It is done this way, red, then green, because struggle must come before the future can be assured.

The *bendera* (flag) is the Black, Red and Green colors given by Marcus Garvey. He ordered the colors as Red, Black and Green, explaining that Red was for the blood of our people not shed in vain; Black was for the faces of our people and Green was for hope. In the 60's, Karenga re-ordered the colors and adjusted the interpretations. Thus, they were ordered as Black, Red and Green. Black for our people; Red for our continuing struggle and Green for our youth and for the future we and our children will build out of struggle.

television special update

GOD, GAYS & THE GOSPEL:
THIS IS OUR STORY

**"GO YE, THEREFORE
AND TEACH ALL NATIONS"**
(Matthew 28:19)

by Greg Cutts
Co-producer TV Special

All the videotaping necessary to complete the TV show is now finished! We got some excellent footage during the last phase of production here in California, and the final show is shaping up really well.

We were in Los Angeles for October 21 to 23 taping material on the UFMCC's main offices, the Board of Elders meeting, Samaritan Education Center, historical footage, as well as material on several of the 25 MCC's in Southern California.

The biggest event in Los Angeles was the taping of the musical segments at the "Mother Church," MCC Los Angeles. The Southern California Metropolitan Community Church Choir, under the very able direction of Mr. Jimmi Irving, showed the four camera set-up that they had done their homework well, and we recorded a truly joyful and beautiful noise made unto the Lord. The whole Fellowship will be proud of this choir when they see them on TV next spring.

Thank God for churches that have board members who are inexhaustible like Larry Rodriguez and ones who can cook like Jimmy Borges, and all the people who helped make that special day happen.

Thanks also to the clergy, lay people and friends who came to hear the Rev. Troy D. Perry preach on the foundation of the Metropolitan Community Churches - that God loves Lesbians and Gay men, just as God loves everyone. Rev. Perry also showed how even the Bible has been misinterpreted concerning Gay men and Lesbians. This message is very timely for America. UFMCC is jumping another hurdle of oppression with this TV show to preach the message to the world that God's love does not discriminate but is universal.

On Halloween we videotaped the Rev. Elder Freda Smith in the California state capitol of Sacramento. We got some beautiful footage of Freda testifying in front of the State Capitol Building itself.

Our last day of videotaping on this production was the 3rd of November when we visited Vacaville men's institution with Bruce Harmon and later interviewed Elder Michael Mank on his way home to San

Francisco. Michael broke open a bottle of champagne for us all upon the completion of his interview to help us celebrate the finishing of all the necessary videotaping for the TV show. Now all we have to do is edit it together - the easy part!

In preparation for the editing process Mary Anne McEwen, president of Forward Focus Productions, Ltd., has taken all this material back to Vancouver, B.C. where all the editing will actually take place.

Greg Cutts, co-producer of the show with McEwen, is remaining in L.A. to arrange final collection and coordination of archival materials to be used in the historical segments of the TV show.

Anyone who has material they promised or wish to make available to the TV production, is urged to send it immediately to Fellowship headquarters, ATTN: TV SHOW. All material will be returned upon completion of the show. Cutts will be returning to Vancouver shortly with the last of such materials, so this is your last chance to contribute to MCC's history (and herstory too) before it goes on the air.

McEwen and Cutts expect post-production (editing) to take approximately two months, with the final show being ready in February 1983 in anticipation of the planned April air-date.

Perry has embarked on a busy fund-raising campaign to raise the final payment for the production. Right now he is criss-crossing the nation, showing a demo tape made by Forward Focus from material recorded at the Tenth General Conference of UFMCC held in Houston, Texas.

Perry is sharing his vision of the TV show and the importance of taking the message of God's love for ALL people to all people. The media is already well established and capable of reaching a mass audience. Perry believes it is time we used the media ourselves, instead of being used by it, as we have been over and over in the past.

Television is expensive but it is also an educating tool without equal. Perry expects this TV show to have a potential viewing audience of 100 MILLION Americans and Canadians alone! Television is the tool of the future that we are living in, and the Rev. Perry and the UFMCC are being prophetic in taking their vision of God's love into the very living rooms of America. The airing of this show will mark a turning point in the modern history of Gay men and Lesbians.

The viewer response the night the TV show is aired will define, with one broad stroke, the emerging "gay-oriented" market that Madison Avenue has been scrambling to find, so far unsuccessfully. No product has yet had a wide enough appeal to define such a market, although everyone knows the "gay market" is "out there" somewhere. This TV show, "GOD, GAYS, and the GOSPEL: THIS IS OUR STORY," will finally define this market. The largeness of this gay-oriented market will shock the "straight" advertising world and within one year there will be commercial gay-oriented programming on the air and making money for its major "straight" sponsors.

This television show will also do more for the Fellowship and toward educating America than anything that has come before. Get ready, Folks, to open the doors to those millions who have never before heard the message that God loves everyone, including Lesbians and Gay men.

Move over, Jerry Falwell, here comes the Truth!

UFMCC is making history, and not only are we writing it ourselves, but we are interpreting it ourselves, too. We have learned that we can't trust the "straight" media to show our point of view. We have to do it ourselves - so we are.

"GOD, GAYS, and the GOSPEL: THIS IS OUR STORY." It's a darn good story. And we're going to tell it well.

NGTF BOARD ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The National Gay Task Force Board of Directors has elected new officers and voted unanimously to offer the position of Executive Director to Virginia Apuzzo.

The newly-elected officers are Betsy Hess (Easthampton, Mass.) and Jose Gomez (San Francisco), Co-Chairs; Jack Campbell (Miami), Treasurer; and Barbara Weinstock (Richmond), Secretary. Bill Beauchamp (Dallas) and Joan Duncan (Norwalk, Conn.) were elected to serve on the six-member Executive Committee along with the officers.

Three new Board members—Paul Vandenberg (Annapolis), Frances Hanckel (Baltimore), and Joan Duncan—elected recently by the NGTF membership, took office at the weekend meeting.



UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

by Jennie Boyd Bull

Chair, FFO

Since the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order was given its mandate at General Conference 1981, it has been hard at work building a network of lay and clergy representatives throughout the Fellowship and supplying them with workshops and other resources for dialogue on our statement of faith and its language changes and development of a Christian theology of sexuality. One of the most exciting aspects of FFO is the equal lay/clergy representation. It is extremely rare in Christianity that the Church has committed itself to the Truth that those who DO theology, the people of God who live the faith, are those responsible for expressing it in words. ALL districts, plus the Hispanic and European extension areas, have elected lay and clergy representatives, who are responsible for leading and encouraging dialogue within their districts and communication with FFO as a commission. Because original budgeted commitments are now unavailable, no general meeting of all FFO representatives will be possible until immediately preceding General Conference in Toronto in 1983, and thus no changes to the Statement of Faith will be proposed. However, a small initial meeting was held at Eastern Clergy Conference in April 1982, and a larger meeting of representatives from eight districts was held following Western Clergy Conference in San Francisco this November. These meetings developed two workshops for presentation at the district and local level: Basics of the Christian Faith I, which focuses on in-

tegrating our spirituality and our sexuality, and Basics of the Christian Faith II, which explores the basics of our statement of faith, seeking to discern areas of agreement, areas of diversity and, most important, helping us learn to share together about our faith. The ecumenical diversity of UFMCC is one of our greatest strengths; FFO is committed to helping us learn to communicate and grow within that diversity.

Since their dissemination Summer 1982, one or both of these workshops have been offered by FFO representatives in all but three UFMCC districts, and FFO representatives are continuing to seek creative ways over the coming year to adapt the workshop process to the unique structure and needs of each of our districts. Some workshops are being carried from church to church by the FFO representatives; others are being offered as part of the programming for district conferences; others are the program for a special district retreat. One purpose of these workshops is to provide FFO with information from a wide, representative spectrum of UFMCC. The information will be collated and circulated throughout the Fellowship.

The November 1982 FFO meeting focused on the following tasks, to be reported in more detail in an upcoming issue of *Journey*:

- training for, feedback from and collation of data from the workshops;
- developing study questions for a Christian theology of sexuality;
- networking at the district and fellowship level through our FFO representatives and Samaritan Extended

Studies, as part of the current emphasis on strengthening our districts;

- planning the pre-conference FFO meeting and report.

As the Fellowship moves in the direction of giving more responsibility to our districts, one area of focus is the priority of Christian education for our Fellowship. Dialogue around our statement of faith must be built on learning to share our Christian faith at the district level. Developing this process of working together on theological issues in our districts is crucial if we are to develop effective means of communication across the wide diversity of our Fellowship. Such grass roots understanding about theological issues is basic to our Christian task, basic to our prophetic task of developing a Christian theology of sexuality, and essential if we are to grow as a Christian body. Part of that task is FFO's work of providing resources to and learning from lay and clergy leaders for theological dialogue and education at the district level. The elected FFO representatives can serve as contacts for Fellowship educational resources and provide local educational resources to their districts and to the Fellowship. This educational resource network will be of lasting value for UFMCC. The pastoral care support system and network being initiated in several of our districts and Fellowship-wide by the Credentials Committee is similar in function. Both networks are part of the essential process of strengthening our districts to be the nurturing, communicating bodies of faith that can give support and direction to our Christian growth and witness at all levels.



THE FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, &
ORDER COMMISSION:
A SHORT HISTORY

The following brief history of FFO, by Jeff Pulling, is being distributed by FFO as part of its workshop resources. Please address any questions or information to your district FFO representatives or to the chair, c/o MCC Baltimore, P.O. Box 1145, Baltimore, MD 21203, phone 301-523-6363.

By the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Ph.D.

At two crucial points in UFMCC's theological history, General Conference has turned to a theological commission format for assistance, the first time in 1973 and the second in 1981. The 1973 General Conference (Atlanta, Georgia) accomplished a major overhaul of the Fellowship By-Laws, including the Statement of Faith (Article III). The hours of debating and voting on doctrine from the conference floor created much anguish and frustration, and the General Conference decided to create the Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order to study the doctrine and ministry of the UFMCC and report back to the 1976 General Conference. The second crucial point was the 1981 General Conference (Houston, Texas). The 1981 Conference saw the culmination of several years' debate over inclusive language and theology and voted many linguistic changes in the Statement of Faith (Article III of the By-Laws) so that UFMCC doctrine was worded in ways that went beyond sexist, racist, and classist terminology. These linguistic changes were accomplished only after again much anguish and frustration. Again, General Conference turned to the FFO Commission to conduct a Fellowship-wide study of the theological implications of these linguistic changes, to propose a Statement of Faith to the Fellowship, and to stimulate the development of a Christian theology of sexuality within the UFMCC.

By referring theological/doctrinal issues to a commission, General Conference has *not* buried theological debate and controversy within the Fellowship and has *not* left these issues to the "experts" to decide. On the contrary, FFO has pro-

vided a forum for all members of the Fellowship to articulate where they are and to explore the theological diversity of their denomination. Many points of theological consensus have also emerged.

The Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order was first established in 1973 with the mandate to study the doctrine and ministry of the UFMCC and to report back to the 1976 General Conference. The first FFO chairperson was the Rev. James Sandmire, Elder. At the 1975 General Conference, the Rev. Howard Wells was appointed by the Board of Elders to assume the responsibilities of chairperson, and the Rev. Valerie Valrejean was appointed vice-chairperson. The 1975 General Conference approved the following tasks for FFO: to present to the 1976 General Conference responses to six questions about the UFMCC's mission and theological task, and to lay the foundations for District-level FFO commissions in order to provide better education for congregations and provide a means to solicit congregational and individual input to the six questions.

The six questions were:

- 1) What is theology? How does it relate to the Christ story?
- 2) What is the theological task of the UFMCC?
- 3) How do we define the community to which we are called to minister?
- 4) How might we focus or bring to bear the Christian Gospel on the needs of the community we have defined?
- 5) How might we reflect or manifest that focusing task in our worship?
- 6) What is the unique emphasis of the Christian ministry of the UFMCC?

FFO completed these two tasks admirably. District-wide FFO workshops were held in all U.S.A. Districts, and the Fellowship-wide FFO had representatives from every U.S.A. District and from Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. Responses to the six questions were received from all over the Fellowship. Just prior to the 1976 General Conference (Washington, D.C.), the FFO Commission met to review all the materials received and to develop responses to the six questions based on all this input. The result was not a "patchwork" product but rather a truly creative synthesis of materials gathered throughout the Fellowship. Short papers on all but the fifth question (dealing with worship) were prepared by the Commission and presented to General Conference, which enthusiastically accepted them. By the 1977 General Conference (Denver, Colorado) FFO had prepared an excellent study guide to assist

congregations in studying the six questions and responses further.

FFO continued to exist from 1977-1981 and had several capable chairpersons and members, but the enthusiasm of 1975-76 waned. Many theological, Biblical, and liturgical study projects were proposed and started by individuals and small groups, but Fellowship-wide interest and support was not forthcoming. It took the theological controversy of 1981 (the inclusive language debate and Statement of Faith changes) to spark new interest in further "grassroots" theological study and input.

The 1981 General Conference gave the following mandate to FFO:

- 1) To research, discuss, and propose to the Fellowship a Statement of Faith, using Article III of the UFMCC By-Laws as its starting point. This process will include the grassroots study method and development of study questions, soliciting input from clergy and laity in every congregation, district, church extension area, and members of the UFMCC congregations.
- 2) To, in particular, apply that research to theological implications of any linguistic changes in the Statement of Faith as adopted at General Conference 1981.
- 3) To develop and disseminate study questions to be considered as the UFMCC develops a Christian theology of sexuality.

To accomplish these tasks, FFO was restructured with lay and clergy representatives elected from each district and church extension area. The new chairperson is the Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull. The Commission has already started its work despite the fact that budgetary restrictions prevent it from having a full meeting until the 1983 General Conference (Toronto, Ontario). FFO members have prepared two workshops to be conducted in each district and church extension area. These workshops are to develop an ongoing grassroots network for Christian education in the UFMCC to study the issues of the 1981 mandate. Specifically, these two workshops deal with the connections between spirituality and sexuality and an exploration of the basic theological propositions in the Statement of Faith. They are designed to solicit input from all over the Fellowship and to stimulate interest in local congregations to study these issues. The data gathered from these workshops will be compiled and then circulated throughout the Fellowship.

Samaritan Extended Studies

Samaritan Extended Studies is an educational ministry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. It is the function of Samaritan Extended Studies to coordinate extension courses and seminars taught around the Fellowship and to offer correspondence courses; continuing education opportunities for clergy; and ministry resources for clergy, student clergy and laypeople. One regular ministry resource is the monthly "Salt of the Earth Resources" (SOTER).

Samaritan Extended Studies is one of the three divisions of Samaritan Education Center, the other two divisions being Samaritan College (Los Angeles) and EXCEL Lay Pro-

gram. The mission of the whole Samaritan Education Center is to generate study and reflection about the prophetic task of the UFMCC in proclaiming and living an inclusive Christianity and in developing a theology of sexuality and liberation. To accomplish this mission Samaritan Education Center through its three divisions offers educational resources and courses for laity, clergy, and student clergy.

The Coordinator of Samaritan Extended Studies is Dr. Jeffrey Pulling, a member of the UFMCC clergy since 1974 and a Samaritan staff member since 1975. Pulling's academic degrees include a B.A. in Religion, a M. Div. (Master of Divinity), and a Ph.D.

Samaritan Extended Studies is located in Hartford, Connecticut, while the main offices of Samaritan Education Center remain in Los Angeles. The Hartford site was chosen for three reasons:

- 1) Its convenient central location in the Northeast of the U.S.A. allows the UFMCC to take better advantage of the educational and theological resources of New York, Boston, New Haven, and Hartford itself.
- 2) An East Coast location is a bold statement that Samaritan truly wants to serve the whole Fellowship and is not just a West Coast institution.
- 3) Dr. Pulling, as Coordinator

and primary resource person, personally chooses to live in New England.

The growth and development of Samaritan Extended Studies is important for the development and growth of the whole Fellowship. Every congregation and member of the UFMCC has reason to support it:

- 1) It will make available more correspondence courses, extension courses, and seminars.
- 2) It will enable the development of more ministry resources for individuals and congregations, such as handbooks, workshops, Bible study materials, articles, and referrals.

continued on page 15

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES PRESENTLY OFFERED

"WHAT IS THE BIBLE?," 1 credit

This is an introductory-level course that is designed to acquaint the student with the Biblical story as a whole, how the Bible came to be, and how to approach and study the Bible. This course will provide the student with the background for a more indepth understanding and study of the Scriptures. There are two textbooks for this course: Bernhard Anderson's *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* and William Barclay's *Introducing the Bible*.

"THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS," 1 credit

This is an introductory-level course based upon Edward Bauman's *The Life and Teaching of Jesus* covering all four canonical Gospels. The aim of the course is to help the student discover what the earthly life of Jesus was all about, how he conducted his ministry, and what he taught. The first half of the course explores Jesus' infancy and childhood, young adulthood, his short ministry, trial and execution, and his resurrection. The second half explores Jesus' teachings about God, the Dominion of God, reconciliation, new life and Jesus' own role.

"HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE SCRIPTURES," 1½ credits

This intermediate-level course deals with homosexuality in the context of the culture, language, and worship of Biblical times; relationships; and sexuality in general. The various passages and verses used to condemn same-sex relations are examined. The primary text is Tom Horner's *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*. Additional readings are authored by Michael England, L. Robert Arthur

and Jeffrey Pulling, three UFMCC clergy and Samaritan faculty members who have researched the subject.

"UFMCC POLITY," 1 credit

This intermediate-level course takes an indepth look at the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. It is a study of the history, government and structure, and development of faith and theology of the UFMCC. The texts include the UFMCC By-Laws, a condensed version of Troy Perry's autobiography, and several articles written by persons in the Fellowship. This is an essential course for those preparing for the professional ministry and would be very helpful for those teaching membership classes, serving on a local Board of Directors, and representing a congregation as a delegate at conferences.

"LOVING YOURSELF, LOVING OTHERS," ½ credit

This is an introductory-level course based upon John Powell's book *The Secret of Staying in Love*. The aim of the course is to assist the student in exploring self-love and love of others. The course material is applicable to everyone, both single persons and those in spousal or romantic relationships. The love explored applies to that between family members and friends as well as that between members of a "couple." Powell's powerful insights include the importance of self-esteem, how we act out lack of self-esteem, how we try to escape from reality and pain, what love is, the counterfeits of love, how love works, the importance of dialogue, and the importance of expressing emotions. Throughout the course, the student will be asked to apply Powell's ideas to their own life experience. No student, however, will be coerced to share more than they want to.

PERSPECTIVES

by Michael Mank
Member, Board of Elders

A favorite hymn in our Fellowship is “The Family of God.” The words of this song portray what many of our congregations strive to be – strong “family” churches with close social ties. When you join the church, you become one of the family!

I recently visited two church members. During our conversation they mentioned our family emphasis. Both men were uncomfortable with the implications of this idea. They had joined our church because it was a comfortable place to worship. They had plenty of friends. Adding to their “family” was not important, but they felt subtle pressure to socialize more with church members or risk being considered cold or snobbish.

Before coming to MCC, my attendance was regular at another place of worship. The main reason for selecting that church was the excellent sermons and music. Multiplying my family circle was far from my mind. I could relate to the dilemma of the two men through my previous experience.

Many of us in MCC are separated from our natural families. Our church family is important and precious. This is good! However, we should recognize that some people do not wish to fulfill family needs in or through our churches. We must support them, not be threatened by their decision. Socializing with the church family is a choice and not an unspoken expectation. Does your church family have a place for distant cousins?

SES continued from page 14

- 3) It will provide more continuing education opportunities and resources for our clergy.
 - 4) It will ensure more coordination of talents and gifts around our Fellowship.
 - 5) It will encourage more research and instruction
- around our Fellowship.
Your prayers, suggestions,
and financial gifts are urgently
needed for Samaritan Extended
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- The Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Ph.D.
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Merry
Christmas
From The
Fellowship Staff



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JULY 11 - 17, 1983

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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By February 28th, 1983

\$75.00 After February 28th,
1983

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